

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2004-143-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC65353 (Pipeline) COC67911 (Road)

PROJECT NAME: 6-inch surface pipeline and access road from the Big Ridge Fed 10-1 to Highway 139

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado

T. 1 S., R. 101 W.,
Sec. 10, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 15, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 16, lot 3, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 17, S $\frac{1}{2}$;
Sec. 18, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$.

APPLICANT: CDX Gas, LLC.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional):

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: An application for an amendment to CDX Gas's existing right-of-way COC65353 for the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a 6-inch surface pipeline and access road has been received.

Proposed Action: The proposed action is for the installation of a 6-inch steel surface pipeline from the Big Ridge Federal 10-1 well to a tie-in point to Xcel Energy's transportation line that runs along side of Highway 139 (Douglas Creek). CDX presently has a 2-inch surface line that comes from the Big Ridge 15-1 well and ties in at the Fork Unit Fed 16-17-1 well. This 2-inch line from the Big Ridge 15-1 well will tie into the proposed 6-inch line, with the remainder of the 2-inch line being removed. The proposed 6-inch surface pipeline will follow the existing road down to the highway. The proposed length for the access road and pipeline is 17,000 with a width of 20 feet encompassing 7.81 acres more or less. The term will run concurrent with original grant which expires December 31, 2031. The proposed pipeline will be authorized pursuant to Section 28 of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended; while the access road

will be authorized pursuant to Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (90 Stat. 2776; 43 U.S.C. 1761).

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, the application would be denied.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The 6-inch surface pipeline is needed in order to transport gas to a market source and the access is required in order service the wells in the area.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.”

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by the proposed action. During periods of low precipitation, air quality in the area of the proposed action is often diminished by dust caused by human disturbance.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. After human activity is completed, blowing dust should return to pre-construction levels.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No increase in dust will occur.

Mitigation: None.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline is in an area that has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level except for the last 1000feet between the CDX 10-1-101#13 well pad and the Snyder Big Ridge #15-4 access road and pipeline route (Conner 1995, Compliance Dated 4/11/1995, Creasman 1981, Compliance dated 3/1981) with no cultural resources reported along the route of the proposed surface pipeline.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed project will not impact any known cultural resources as long as the POD and stipulations are strictly adhered to.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has

been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The project site is primarily a pinyon/juniper woodland with sparse understory. The soils are shallow but do reclaim readily.

No noxious weed species have been identified in the project area. There is the opportunity for noxious weeds to be introduced to the site by construction equipment and support vehicles. Weeds of concern include cheatgrass, halogaton, and the knapweed species.

The proposed seed mix contains non-native species. These species were chosen as they are highly adapted to site conditions. These species have not been shown to invade the adjacent plant communities or to interbreed with native species.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There will be relatively little surface disturbance and the proposed reclamation measures are appropriate. Disturbed areas are expected to reclaim readily in approximately three to five years.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts.

Mitigation: As included in the application.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: Non-game populations associated with these ranges are widespread and common throughout pinyon-juniper habitats in this Resource Area (e.g., green-tailed and spotted towhee, vesper and lark sparrows). There are no specialized or narrowly endemic species known to occupy the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Since this is a surface line, excavation will not occur and there should be no removal of habitat for migratory birds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened, endangered or sensitive animal species occurring within the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: There are no threatened, endangered or sensitive animal species occurring within the project area. Thus, this standard is not applicable.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by this project.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The upper portion of the proposed action is in the Left Fork East Fourmile Draw and the lower portion is the Douglas Creek drainage, both are tributary to the White River. A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. This action is in a Category 1, Priority 2, watershed (The Lower White) identified in the Unified Watershed Assessment report. The state

has reasons to believe this watershed has water quality problems (sediment and salinity loads) that may impair the watershed.

The State has classified this stream segment as Aquatic Life Warm 1, Recreation 1a, Water Supply and Agriculture. The state has further defined water quality parameters with table values. These standards reflect the ambient water quality and define maximum allowable concentrations for the various water quality parameters. The anti-degradation rule applies to this segment meaning no further water quality degradation is allowable that would interfere with or become harmful to the designated uses.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Since the proposed action is for a surface line, vegetation is not expected to be removed, thus eliminating the negative impacts associated with surface disturbance.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts from the no-action alternative are not anticipated.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The area of the proposed action currently meets the Public Land Health standards and would continue to do so after the surface line is built.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian zones present in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: There are no wetlands or riparian zones present in the project areas. Thus, there would be no effect on achieving the land health standard.

WILDERNESS

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline is located adjacent to the Big Ridge Citizens Wilderness Proposal (BRCWP) along an existing road that is cherry stemmed from the boundary.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is not in the BRCWP therefore impacts to the potential wilderness character would not be jeopardized. No additional disturbance will occur, however there will be an increase in use during the construction period; returning to pre-construction usage once the pipeline is completed.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The soils have been mapped in an order III soil survey by NRCS and are available from that office for review. Refer to the table below for the type of soils and associated properties affected by the proposed action.

% Action	Soil Map #	Soil Name	Slope	Range site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
5	53	Moyerson stony clay loam	15-65%	Clayey Slopes	2-4	Rapid	Very high	10-20
45	70	Redcreek-Rentsac complex	5-30%	PJ woodlands/PJ woodlands	<2	Very high	Moderate to high	10-20
45	74	Rentsac-Moyerson-Rock Outcrop complex	5-65%	PJ Woodlands/Clayey Slopes	<2	Medium	Moderate to very high	10-20
5	91	Torriorthents-Rock Outcrop complex	15-90%	Stoney Foothills		Rapid	Very high	10-20

The majority of the proposed surface pipeline goes through soils that have been designated as CSU-1, fragile and/or saline on slopes greater than 35% in the White River ROD/RMP.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Since the proposed action is for a surface pipeline, impacts to soils in general and to those that are considered to be fragile and/or saline would be non-existent.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The proposed action would not alter the soils ability to meet the Public Land Health standard for upland soils.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The predominate vegetation is a stand of pinyon/juniper with Utah juniper domination. The understory is sparse grasses and forbs.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Very few if any trees would be lost as a result of construction activities and as such there are not expected to be any changes in composition or productivity of these plant communities.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no adverse impacts.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed action would not affect the current plant communities and the standard for plant communities would be maintained.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There is no aquatic wildlife in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): There is no aquatic wildlife present in the project areas. Thus, there would be no effect on achieving the land health standard.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This surface line is about 19,000 feet long and follows an existing road. The majority of this length runs adjacent to pinyon-juniper woodlands of varying age. Much of the area holds moderate potential for nesting by raptors. This project falls within normal winter range for mule deer.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: During installation of the pipeline, this project will potentially result in increased activity in an area holding moderate potential for nesting by raptors, as well as an increase in the disturbance from additional road traffic. This has the potential to disturb nesting activities or displace wintering big game.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Potential disturbance to big game and nesting raptors would not occur at this time or place.

Mitigation: Since this is a surface line, no vegetation should be removed for the completion of this project. Production from the Federal 10-1 should be established before the installation of pipeline to that location. The site currently is occupied by a dry hole marker.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): This project would not jeopardize the viability of any animal population. It would have no significant consequence on terrestrial habitat condition, utility, or function, nor have any discernible affect on animal abundance or distribution at any landscape scale. This public land health standard will thus be met.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management		X	
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management		X	

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses			X

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline project is in an area mapped as the Mesa Verde Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition I formation, which means it is known to produce scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Provided that the project remains a surface pipeline only with no excavation or impacts to surface outcrops there will be no new impacts to fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. No excavations into the underlying bedrock formation is permitted for any reason.

2. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action is within a VRM class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is small in scale relative to the surrounding landscape; therefore, any modifications will be unseen to the casual observer, and VRM III objectives will be met.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impact on visual resources.

Mitigation: Allow pipeline to oxidize naturally to decrease its visual impact.

WILD HORSES

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in the northwestern portion of the Piceance-East Douglas wild horse herd management area (HMA). The objective of wild horse management in the Piceance-East Douglas HMA is to “provide a healthy, viable breeding population [of horses] with a diverse age structure.” The area identified for disturbance coincides with wild horse winter range. Horses are widely distributed through this portion of the HMA between November and early spring of each year.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Construction of this pipeline alone is not expected to result in any changes in wild horse distribution, animal behavior, or herd health. Recognition is being made that increased oil and gas related activity in this portion, or any portion of the HMA could result in long-term negative effects on herd distribution, animal behavior and animal health.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Cumulative impacts from oil and gas development were analyzed in the White River Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS) completed in June 1996. Current development, including the proposed action, has not exceeded the cumulative impacts from the foreseeable development analyzed in the PRMP/FEIS.

REFERENCES CITED:

Conner, Carl E.

- 1995 Cultural Resource Inventory Report on Twenty-seven Well Locations and Associated Access Roads/Pipeline Routes in the Douglas Creek Arch Area Rio Blanco County, Colorado for Snyder Oil Corporation. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Creasman Steven D.

- 1981 Archaeological Investigations in the Canyon Pintado Historic District, Rio Blanco County, Colorado; Phase I – Inventory and Test Excavations. Reports of the Laboratory of Public Archaeology No. 34, February, 1981. Laboratory of Public Archaeology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden

1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Carol Hollowed	P&EC	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Robert Fowler	Forester	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Marty O'Mara	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Carol Hollowed	P&EC	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	ORP	Wilderness
Carol Hollowed	P&EC	Soils
Robert Fowler	Forester	Vegetation
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	ORP	Access and Transportation
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Robert Fowler	Forester	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	ORP	Recreation
Chris Ham	ORP	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	NRS	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the mitigation measures listed below.

MITIGATION MEASURES: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3. Since this is a surface line, no vegetation should be removed for the completion of this project. Production from the Federal 10-1 should be established before the installation of the pipeline to the location. The site currently is occupied by a dry hole marker.
4. No excavations into the underlying bedrock formation is permitted for any reasons.
5. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer. The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.
6. The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by this project.
7. The pipeline will be allowed to oxidize naturally to decrease the visual impact.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance will be conducted by the realty staff every five years.

NAME OF PREPARER: Penny Brown

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline P. Hollowed 8/27/04

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Hunt C. Walte
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

ATTACHMENTS: Map of the location of the proposed action.
Exhibit A

Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2004-143-EA

